

REMARKS

Claims 1-14 are pending in this application.

I. Claim Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103

The Examiner rejected claims 1-5 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Schreiter in view of Shimada. However, assumes that the Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 7, 9, 10-12, and 14 as being unpatentable over Schreiter in view of de Boer from the Examiner's reasoning. However, applicant respectfully disagrees. In summary, the amended claims include the following main limitations:

- a) a central data line including a plurality of distributor nodes;
- b) a plurality of branch off stub like data lines with a plurality of signal processing units coupled in a serial fashion; wherein
- c) the first signal processing unit is coupled with a respective distributor node;
- d) **the last of the signal processing units is coupled with the respective distributor node.**

The Examiner states that Schreiter discloses all the elements a)-c) of the independent claims except element d), namely the return from the last signal processing unit which, however, is allegedly disclosed by de Boer. Applicant respectfully disagrees. The Examiner most likely misinterpreted this limitation. The claim, however, clearly states that the last element is coupled with the respective distributor node.

De Boer discloses a system with two switch nodes. A switch node is, however, not a distributor node. Nevertheless, assuming that a switch node is comparable to a distributor node, then it is unclear where the stub-like data lines are formed. If for example, the branch 212P and the network element 210A are viewed as such a stub-like data line, then the requirement that the last element in the stub-like data line must be coupled with the respective distributor node is missing. According to the description of de Boer, element 200A, G2, G1, and 200B form a ring. Similarly, elements 210A, G2, G1, and 210B form a second ring. Thus, the first elements of each ring are coupled with switch G2 wherein the last element of the ring are

coupled with switch G1. Therefore, de Boer does not render the arrangement of the present independent claims obvious.

Moreover, de Boer does not disclose branch off stub-like data lines as disclosed in the present application or as disclosed in Schreiter. A person skilled in the art would compare the main ring structure as disclosed by de Boer due to its particular ring structure with the central data line. Thus, a person skilled in the art would not receive any hint from the prior art to couple the last element of a branch off stub-like data line with the distributor node from which the data line branches off as required by the independent claims.

II. Dependent Claims

The claims 2-7, and 9-14 are dependent claims and, thus, include all the limitations of the respective independent claims 1 or 8. Therefore, these claims are patentable at least to the extent of the respective independent claims. Because Applicant believes that the prior art does not anticipate the independent claims 1 or 8, Applicant would like to defer any reasoning with respect to the dependent claims at this time.

SUMMARY

In light of the above remarks, reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejection is respectfully requested. It is further submitted that the application is now in condition for allowance and early notice of the same is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner have any questions, comments or suggestions in furtherance of the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the agent of record by telephone or facsimile.

Applicants do not believe that any other fees are due at this time; however, should any fees under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 to 1.21 be required for any reason relating to this document, the Commissioner is authorized to deduct the fees from Deposit Account No. 02-0383, (*formerly Baker & Botts, L.L.P.*) Order Number 071308.0170.

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Expires: June 30, 2005

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